

XXXIV.—*On the proper Names of the Two Forms of Black-eared Chats.* By JOSEPH I. S. WHITAKER, F.Z.S.

IN the January number of 'The Ibis' (1903, pp. 90 and 91) I notice that Mr. Dresser, writing on the synonymy of some Palearctic Birds, disputes the validity of the name *Saxicola caterinæ* (not *catarinæ*, as spelled by him), which was given by me to the western form of the Black-eared Chat ('Ibis,' 1898, p. 625).

Mr. Dresser commences, very rightly, by recognising the distinctness of the eastern and western forms of the Black-eared Chat, but proceeds to state that, both forms having already received names, "*Saxicola caterinæ*" can only be regarded as a synonym, and finally concludes, somewhat arbitrarily, and without giving any reasons for his deduction, by saying that "the eastern form will therefore stand as *Saxicola amphiteuca* Hempr. & Ehrenb., and the western as *Saxicola albicollis* (Vieill.)."

In order to arrive at a satisfactory solution of this question of names (for apparently the distinctness of the two respective forms or species is now recognised by most ornithologists), it is necessary to examine and carefully consider previous descriptions of the Black-eared Chat, with a view to ascertaining, so far as may be possible, to which form they refer.

Taking first Vieillot's *Ænanthe albicollis* (Nouv. Dict. xxi. p. 424, 1818), the description given to this bird, although in many respects applying equally to both forms, when taken as a whole applies far better to the eastern form than to the western. To begin with, the plumage of the upper parts in the western form could never correctly be described as of a "beau blanc," even "légèrement teint de roux," &c., the upper plumage of this form being distinctly cream-coloured. On the other hand, in the eastern form these parts *are* of a fine white. Secondly, the words "une bande noire traverse et enveloppe l'œil" are certainly more applicable to the eastern form, in which the eye is completely and very markedly encircled by the black band; whereas in the western form it is not generally so, being

either without any black at all above the eye or with merely a very narrow line. Lastly, the words "les couvertures du dessus et du dessous des ailes sont de cette couleur (noire) ainsi que les *pennes*" would indicate that Vieillot meant that the quills as well as the wing-coverts were black, both above and below.

I do not know where Vieillot's type-specimen may be, if, indeed, there be one in existence; but I may say that the form of Black-eared Chat most often met with in Europe appears to be the eastern and not the western, the range of the latter being more or less confined to a comparatively small portion of the Continent.

I would here observe that the term eastern, as applied to the Black-eared Chat with a dark under-wing, is somewhat misleading, the range of this form extending right across the European Continent as far west as France and Portugal. Mr. Dresser is evidently unaware of this fact, as, in a letter, he informs me that he has never heard of its occurrence further west than Montenegro and Albania.

With regard to Temminck's *Saxicola aurita* (Man. d'Orn. i. 1820, p. 241), his description, although, on the whole, more applicable to the eastern form of Black-eared Chat than to the western, is so vague that it might apply equally to either. Owing, however, to the kindness of Dr. Otto Finsch, of the Rijks Museum at Leiden, where Temminck's collection is preserved, I have been able to ascertain that Temminck's specimens of Black-eared Chats are from South France, Italy, Portugal, Egypt, Bogosland, and Arabia, and that they all agree in having the under surface of the wing *black*. Dr. Finsch was unable to inform me which particular specimen had served Temminck as his type; but presumably his description was taken from one of these examples, and, seeing that all the specimens have the under surface of the wing black, we are justified in concluding that Temminck's description of *S. aurita* applies to the eastern and not to the western Black-eared Chat, which has the under surface of the wing of a light colour.

This is, indeed, all the more probable when we consider that the eastern Black-eared Chat is the form found throughout the greater part of Southern Europe, as well as in Asia Minor and North-east Africa; while the western form, so far as I have been able to ascertain, with the exception perhaps of an occasional straggler, occurs only in North-west Africa, South Spain, Sicily, and one or two other West-Mediterranean coast-districts.

Hemprich and Ehrenberg's descriptions of *S. aurita* var. *libyca* and *S. amphileuca* (Symb. Phys. 1829, and Symb. Aves, 1833) are also rather vague, but there can be no doubt that both refer to the eastern Black-eared Chat and must therefore be regarded as synonyms of *S. albicollis* (Vieill.) or *S. aurita* Temm.

Dr. Finsch, in his Catalogue of Birds in the Leyden Museum (p. 151), is unable to separate *S. aurita* and *S. amphileuca*, specimens in his collection from South France and Bogosland being identical. This form of the species, in fact, as already mentioned, has a wide range from east to west, and the term *eastern* as applied to it, being misleading, might perhaps with advantage be changed for some other more appropriate designation.

In conclusion, I maintain that both Vieillot's and Temminck's descriptions refer to the Eastern Black-eared Chat, and that Hemprich and Ehrenberg's names are synonyms; so that the name *Saricola caterine*, failing proof to the contrary, should stand for the western Black-eared Chat.

XXXV.—*Notices of recent Ornithological Publications.*

[Continued from p. 265.]

67. '*Annals of Scottish Natural History.*'

[The Annals of Scottish Natural History. No. 45, January 1903, and No. 46, April 1903.]

Mr. Harvie-Brown begins the January number with a sympathetic "In Memoriam" of his—and our—esteemed friend, the late T. E. Buckley; and this is followed by his